

Anna bakes bread for her family every Saturday morning. The most crucial part of bread baking is growing the yeast. Yeast is a living organism used to make bread rise. When placed in warm water, yeast begins to grow and bubble. Anna pours lukewarm water into a bowl and tests the temperature. She knows that hot water will kill the yeast and that the bread will not rise. Therefore, she makes sure the water temperature is somewhere between 105 and 115 degrees Fahrenheit.

Next, Anna sprinkles a package of active dry yeast over the water. She then adds a little sugar and occasionally a pinch of powdered ginger. Yeast feed on these ingredients and grows. After about ten minutes, Anna checks the mixture for carbon dioxide bubbles. If she sees some of this foam, she knows the yeast is alive, and bread baking can begin. Checking to see whether the yeast is alive is called "proofing" the yeast.

To the yeast mixture Anna adds warm milk, salt, and melted butter. She gradually stirs flour into the mixture. Depending on the weather and the freshness of the flour, varying amounts of flour are necessary to produce proper dough. Anna adds flour until the dough is no longer sticky. When learning how to bake bread, Anna discovered that adding too much flour makes a hard, dry loaf.

The dough is now ready to be kneaded. She turns the dough onto the floured surface of the table and dusts her hands with additional flour. If the dough is kneaded properly, the gluten will develop and enable the bread to rise. Leaning over the table, Anna presses the palms of her hands firmly into the dough and then folds the dough.

She continues to do this for almost ten minutes, adding flour as necessary.

When the dough is smooth and elastic, Anna places it in a large bowl and covers it. She has turned the light on in the oven to create a warm place for the dough to rise. The dough rests for almost two hours before Anna opens the oven door. The dough has doubled in size and the oven smells of yeast. Anna forms two loaves. The dough must rest a second time before baking.

After thirty minutes, the loaves are ready to go into the hot oven. Anna watches as they continue to rise a little and begin to turn light brown. The delicious aroma of baking bread fills the house. Her family cannot resist the smell of fresh bread. They wait eagerly as the bread sits on the cooling rack. Before long, everyone is enjoying a slice of Anna's special bread.

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